



COLLECTOR'S EDITION

MY ART OF COLLECTING ART MEDALS

Written by Ira Rezak

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

If you look in the Merriam-Webster dictionary on-line for a definition of "art" the first definition is "a skill acquired by experience, study or observation", then comes "an occupation requiring knowledge or skill". It's only when you get down to the fourth definition that you learn that "art" as a verb has also come to mean "the conscious use of skill and creative imagination especially in the production of aesthetic objects", and therefore, as a noun, "the works so produced".

In fact, as a verb, "art" has the even more general meaning of any skillful plan or way of doing something. In Shakespeare's Macbeth (Act I Scene IV) King Duncan wisely observes that one can never discern a person's intention just by looking at him, saying "there's no art to know the mind's construction in the face."



France: The Numismatist's Dream by Michel.
Bronze, 174 mm. 1977. obv

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AMSA OFFICERS

President: Heidi Wastweet
heidi@wastweetstudio.com

Vice President: Anne-Lise Deering
supermedal@frontier.com

Vice President: Eugene Daub
eugenedaub@cox.net

Treasurer: Douglas White
dkwhite@umich.edu

Secretary: Jim Licaretz
idolls@earthlink.net

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Marie Jean Lederman
mariejean201@yahoo.com

Lotte Cherin
clotte@gmail.com

Ken Douglas
dieman@att.net

Anne Cooper
hamandogre@yahoo.com

Lindsay Nonhof-Fisher
fisher.lindsay.m@gmail.com

Mel Wacks
Numismel@aol.com

Editor: Aayush Sharma

For general information or to submit an article or inquire about placing an ad, send your email to
Amsanews@frontier.com

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American Medallic Sculpture Assoc.
PO Box 1201
Edmonds WA 98020

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Greetings artists, sculptors, designers, teachers, collectors, dealers and all lovers of medals. There's a good reason AMSA stands for American Medallic SCULPTURE Association and not the American Medallic SCULPTOR'S Association - Our mission of promoting the art of the medal is all inclusive. That is why we wanted to spotlight this issue of the newsletter on collecting medals.

While many members are artists, we are almost all collectors to some degree. I know

some of you are crazy serious collectors and others don't even put that label on yourself even if you have several medals you have acquired here and there.

Personally, I cherish my small collection of medals I have gathered over the years. I usually have one or two of them out on my desk for inspiration as I'm working. I rotate them depending on what I'm working on at the time. Some I bought directly from the artists or at a gallery, older ones on EBay, some by trade and some came by way of gifts. ...I can't say though that I have ever deaccessioned any. These are all for keeps.

My first pick to share is by polish master medalist Ewa Olszewska-Borys. This is a large heavy medal I love to hold. Her style has influenced my work greatly. The second is from the Hall of Fame series. This is by Donald Delue and I just love his distinctive style and creativity. My third pick is a rather random medal that I found on Ebay by Irene Vilar. I was attracted to it for its aesthetics, regardless of the subject matter. Every time I look at it I am reminded that in my own work, the most important this is that it attracts the eye, no matter what the subject matter is. Then I have a very obscure medal of Judith produced by the Uffizzi Museum in Italy. My last pick is an unusual piece I found in a shop in Santorini Greece. This small moon came in a charming hinged paper egg-shaped container.

A huge thank you to everyone who sent in photos of their personal collections. We could not have done this issue without you!

This is our last issue of 2018. I hope you have had a productive and creative year and that you have found in AMSA a community like no other. We love to hear your feedback so let us know what you like or what you would like to see.

Remember our membership dues are due on Jan. 1st. You can pay online on our website or mail a check. And don't forget to enter your best work of 2018 for American Medal of the Year. Entry details are on our website.

See you next year!
Heidi Wastweet





'Copernicus' by
Ewa Olszewska-Borys



Matthew Fontaine Maury
by
Donald Delue



Moon Medal by Yorgos Kypris
with cast paper clamshell



'Judith'
from Uffizzi
Museum



Congres de la FEAMC
by
Irene Vilar



Since I've been a collector of medals for sixty years and can claim experience, study and observation aplenty, I've acquired some knowledge of medals and would seem to qualify as a practitioner of the art of collecting. But, even though I've lived what some might consider a productive life, I can't claim to have developed the skill of producing what is generally called art, that is, aesthetically pleasing material objects. Consequently, one might say that I am artful in the first sense of the word, though not in its later aesthetic meaning. It also happens that as a collector I've focused mainly on the content, the subject matter of the medals I like to collect which includes Jewish history, medical history and numismatics. So, like many other collectors I associate with, I have privileged thematics rather than aesthetics. Nevertheless, consciously or unconsciously, over the years I have acquired many medals that may be considered artistic in the aesthetic sense and so, it seems reasonable to say that my "art" of collecting has led to a gathering and appreciation of "art medals". This brings to mind Monsieur Jourdain, the character in Molière's play *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, who was amazed to discover that he had been speaking prose all his life though he had been unaware that he had acquired such a skill.

So, how did it come about that a thematically oriented collector actually came to own "art medals"? A lot of the credit has to go to those who first conceived of a need for the medals in which I became interested – the kings, other officials, patrons and entrepreneurs of all sorts - without whose initiative these medals would never have been made. It was clearly their motivation that provided the spark which initiated the medals' creation, but also it was their own aesthetic experiences which directed them toward particularly skillful craftsmen whom they then commissioned to execute the medals which have now come down to me.

**Ira
Rezak**



France: *The Numismatist's Dream* by Michel
Bronze, 174 mm. 1977. rev

Canada: *John Polanyi* by Dora dePedery Hunt
Bronze, 84x80 mm. 1987. obv

United States: *Joseph Pulitzer Prize* by Daniel
Chester French. Bronze, 70 mm. 1918. obv

Germany: *Max Bernhardt* by Ludwig Gies.
Bronze, 63x66 mm. 1916. obv/rev

Belgium: *Medaille de Waterloo* by Felicien Rops.
Bronze, 35 mm. 1858. obv



These skilled craftsmen are, of course, properly called artists today, but until the late 19th Century they would more likely have been thought of as artisans, workmen hired to artfully perform a technical task. I wish to emphasize that, historically, after the thought that initiated most medals, many stages, influences, and contingencies played significant roles both before and after the medallic engravers or modelers contributed their particular skills. Thus, I don't tend to think of my collected medals primarily as products of the imagination and creativity of the artist/artisan who cut the die or sculpted the bas relief, because other metal workers, merchants, suppliers, officials, distributors and recipients have undoubtedly played their parts in what I think of as the life history of the medals I own. So I approach each medal as a polyvalent object formed within its particular social context, as a product of both past and present influences, of styles and fashions (novel or traditional), dependent on techniques that evolved over centuries, and of course designed to answer the particular societal purposes for which they were created at the behest of the patron or government that initiated their production. have now come down to me.



Germany: Hania Goldschmidt by Benno Elkan. Silver, 95 mm. 1915. obv

France: Jean Leon Gerome by Jules-Clement Chaplain. Silvered Electrotpe, 101 mm. 1885. obv



France: (Maurice Letulle) "Morte Spectata Servare Vitam" by Eugene Bourgouin. Bronze, 70x55 mm. 1923. rev



"This is a medal that I bought fifty years ago in complete ignorance of what it was. The hard-to-read inscription to the left reads "Brutto Ritrato" (crudely drawn), this being a sketch that Saint-Gaudens made of his friend Sargent when both were young and not yet famous artists in Paris. Again, not troubling to read the rest of the inscription which reads "My friend John Sargent, Paris MCCCCXXX", I decided to buy a medal I thought was a portrait of an unknown Italian named Brutto Ritrato. Instead I ended up with an original cast from the hand of Augustus Saint-Gaudens

MY FAVORITE MEDALS & WHAT TO COLLECT

Written by Mark Benvenuto



Our AMSA president threw down a fascinating challenge in the last issue of the AMSA Members Exchange, that we might share thoughts about our favorite medal or medals, and discuss a bit about how and why we collect. I'll take that challenge.

Favorites?

When it comes to naming just one medal as a favorite, I think that's the proverbially loaded question. I started collecting coins decades ago as a child, and noticed with time that I gravitated towards series that were artistically pleasing to me. I moved into medals somewhere in my time as a cadet, in part because while wearing greys (as we used to call that straightjacket of a grey blouse we wore to lunch, dinner, and off-post) we didn't have any medals on our uniforms, but many of our senior instructors did. In a small museum on the post of the Virginia Military Institute, in what was called the Hall of Valor, was quite an extensive collection of military medals, including some from other nations, and including not one but six of what are commonly called the Congressional medal of honor. These had all been donated by alumni or their next of kin, and some of them were quite attractive – and reading the citations

for why many were awarded made me realize how much I did NOT want the opportunity to earn almost all of them. Yet many of the foreign awards were strange, oddly-named, and attractive enough that they commanded a person's attention.

But after graduation, when I was posted to what was then West Germany, I got a real glimpse at some of the art medals of the continent. This was quite some time ago, but dealers then often had both coins and medals in their shops; and some of the medals were very attractive and also very affordably priced. I think now that the collecting community over there was probably an eclectic mix of coin collectors, paper money collectors, and medal collectors. There was, after all, quite the tradition of making medals. Many seemed to have a theme related to some event or other in the First World War, and often made a statement, be it political or satirical.

As to favorites, though? Well, some of the Olympic participation medals I have been able to acquire, either on that side of "the Big Pond," as we used to call it, or closer to home, have been favorites for

some time. Perhaps it's the mixture of the design as well as the idea of commemorating the ability to which a human can push himself or herself, but such medals became favorites quite easily.

Favorites change with time, though. And so, quite recently, a new favorite pushed all the others aside. The photo shows two medals that sit on my desk at work, where I can see them, hold them, and enjoy them on a daily basis. Susan Taylor's FIDEM XXXV 2018 medal is that one shining star that has indeed pushed all the others aside. Its shape is non traditional, yet close enough to traditional that it catches the eye without being glaring or distracting. Its subject matter and imagery is both stunning and beautiful. The dense bronze alloy it is made of gives it a heft in the palm of the hand that is simply unparalleled among my other medals. And paired up with the medal from the FIDEM XXXIV in Ghent two years ago, it is noticeable enough that a string of students constantly ask what they are and how I managed to come by them (okay, I'll admit that last reason is probably not one that many of us use for keeping medals on our desk routinely).

How to collect?

The other chunk of this challenge is to give some thoughts as to why we collect. Perhaps strangely, I never went into this with a plan. Much like the lottery winner who knows nothing about art, but now has the money to buy a hoard of it, and who says, "I may not know great art, but I know what I like," I found that while I knew very little about certain artists or art movements, I bought what I liked and constantly learned more about my medals as I bought them. I found that collecting older medals was something of a crap shoot, with me haunting markets and bazaars as my wife and I traveled around when not on weekend duty. I also found that some national mints, like the Austrian Mint or the British Royal Mint, had wonderfully broad medal programs and offerings.

When the active duty military and I parted ways, I was back in the U.S., and able to spend a bit of time once again haunting flea markets, bazaars, and outdoor markets on weekend mornings. I found that the offerings were different on our side of the Atlantic. The medals had a more political set of themes to them, or so I felt. But yet again, the prices were rather low, as there seem to be many more numismatists who focused just on coins – usually coins of the United States – then there were folks who specialized in medals. I still have a Franklin Delano Roosevelt medal that must have been a product of the United States Mint some time back, one that I picked up at an open air flea market for little more than a song. Yes, it has some wear. Perhaps it was someone else's favorite once. But the mourning Liberty on the reverse, right hand holding out a laurel wreath, with the "IN MEMORIAM" in the exergue, still make this a powerful piece, and in my eyes a beautiful one.

It appears then that I collect based on beauty. I have several artist friends, but do not necessarily buy all their work. I have several pieces that are beautiful, yet for which I do not know the artist. And now, very importantly, I have Susan Taylor's amazingly beautiful medal that is the official piece for the FIDEM XXXV. Both a beauty and a new favorite. You have to like that combination.





I acquired the Marion Fountain medal at the FIDEM Paris expositon in 2002. I love both her medallic and three dimensional sculpture work. The fact that I can wear this piece also means I can show it to others more often than the other medals I keep at home as well as tell them about the art form too.

I met Israeli medalist Oleg Gavrizon at the Paris FIDEM as well and he was a super guy, really nice. The one thing I especially recall was that he worked in reverse plaster and that he was making one a day for a year. Many of the medals he brought were bronze but I was lucky enough to get the one terra cotta medal he brought for a price I could afford.



The first medal I ever purchased was the Nicola Moss medal of the woman looking into a pool with the close up of fish circling on the reverse. I bought it while attending the FIDEM in Den Hague. I never tire of looking at and experiencing this medal. I think it reflects the medal at it's best, the weight, the feel of it's surface, the size (2.5 inches, fits my palm perfectly), and the perfect balance of narrative between the obverse and reverse. I have never seen another I liked better than this, my first purchased medal.

The last but not least art medal I am including is one by the well known, loved, and respected Ivanka Mincheva. Lucky me on acquiring this one as she saw and liked one of my medals, "Stormy Monday", and asked if I would like to make a trade for one of her unique works. WOULD I??? I was thrilled, so we made a trade at the FIDEM in Seixal Portugal in 2004. I wish I had had the forethought to write down the title but I think the relief work speaks for itself.



"Nurtured Nurturer" by Barry Johnston



"New Generation" by Heidi Dobberkau



"Trees" by Werner Niermann



"Owl" by Heidi Dobberkau

LE MÉDAILLIER MEDAL SHIELD

Written by Richard Jewell

Fantastic 'Le Médailleur' (Paris, France) Medal-Order Shield 24 Medals, Four Military Orders, and Three Coats of Arms in One Display



Fantastic "Le Médailleur" (Paris, France) Badge, Medal-Order Shield. A phenomenal, fantastic, and attention-getting sales sample display from "Le Médailleur" company, Paris, who were based at 13, rue du Conservatoire at the time this piece was produced. This large, wood-framed, plexiglass-enclosed display comprises 24 medals of varying sizes and metals; four military orders or decorations; and three coats of arms. In the couple of days that this display was visible in the present cataloger's office, numerous employees have expressed interest in bidding on it, even those who normally have no interest in medals, military orders, or other exnumia.

Another exciting aspect of this merchant display is the sheer range of work that it covers, from 1823 to 1900. The three coats of arms depict a sailing ship (Norway?), a possibly French fleur de lis design, and a definitely Russian two-headed dragon.

The military orders comprise a beautiful inlaid piece with legend "A la lealtad acrisolada," (perhaps from Spaniards in Cuba), and a second porcelain piece with legend "Virtuti et merito" the motto of the Order of Charles III. Two smaller orders read "Napoleon Empereur des Francais" and "Republique Français 1870."

Medals comprise: Paris 1823, copper, 53 mm, Louis XVIII of France; Paris 1827, copper, 53 mm, Charles X Roi de France; Paris 1834, copper, 53 mm, Louis Philippe I; Paris 1839, copper, 53 mm, Exposition des Produits de l'Industrie, unawarded medal; Paris 1844, white metal, 53 mm "Aux Arts Utiles"; Paris 1849, white metal, 53 mm, Republique Française; Paris 1855, white metal, 53 mm, Napoleon III; London (Londres) 1862, copper, 73 mm, a fine, high-relief portrait of a seated Britannia figure, lion lying at her feet, with three maidens presenting her with gifts from industry and agriculture, three other maidens behind her, no legends; Portugal (Porto) 1865, Exposiçao International Porto 1865; Paris 1867, gilt, 48 mm, Napoleon III; Vienna (Vienne) 1873, gilt, 66 mm, Franz Joseph I Kaiser von Oesterreich Koenig von Boehmen etc. Apost. Koenig von Ungarn; Moscow (Moscou) 1875, a Moscow exhibition/event with 1872 date; Sydney 1876,



73 mm, Sydney N.S.W. International Exhibition, (with date 1879 in Roman numerals), especially fine; Philadelphia (Philadelphie) 1876, gilt, 48 mm, seated female figure bestowing a wreath, from the Centennial Exposition; Paris 1878, gilt, 48 mm, Republique Française; Amsterdam 1883, gilt, 66 mm, Willem III Koning der Nederlanden; Barcelona (Barcelone) 1888, Exposición Universal de Barcelona; Paris 1889, gilt, 60 mm, two pieces showing obverse and reverse, Republique Française / Exposition Universelle; Paris 1890, gilt, 49 mm, Academie Nationale Agricole Manufacturière et Commerciale; Chicago 1893, white metal, two pieces showing obverse and reverse, Exposition International de Chicago (World's Fair), Section Française, Hors Concours; and Paris 1900, gilt, 60 mm, two pieces showing obverse and reverse, Republique Française / Exposition Universelle Internationale.

Besides its status as an attractive and memorable display of medalllic art, this piece is loaded with political and mercantile history. Beginning with the French royalty, the firm over time created new markets, first with the royalty among its European neighbors, moving over the decades into more and more international markets, participating in the booming expositions and fairs markets, and eventually reaching faraway customers in countries such as Australia. Although this is a snapshot, a moment in time, of this French company, it could become the basis for extensive research into this fascinating area.





plaster
Baby Rembrandt
by Elizabeth Varga

Bronze by Czech glass
and medal sculptor
Jiri Hrcuba



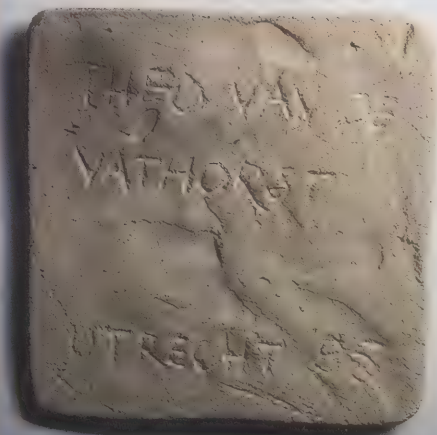
Bronze by Italian sculptor Stefano Johnson



Bronze by Kelichi Uryu



Bronze by Nicola Moss



Plaster by Theo Van De Vathorst





Pennsylvania Railroad Heroic Service Medal. Bronze, struck by Gorham & Co. 111 awarded from 1923-1955. Most are dated and named, some are known un-awarded. Minted by Gorham & Co. and as was usual with that firm, unattributed to an artist. Great view of the railroad's famous locomotive, reverse used the laurel, keystone and corporate seal.

James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore. 1911. By J. Maxwell Miller. Struck by Medallic Art Co. 12 in silver, several hundred in bronze, 70mm. 50th Anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood, 25th Anniversary as Cardinal. Features Baltimore's Cathedral on the reverse.



John Cardinal Farley, Archbishop of New York. 1911. By Laura Gardin (soon to be wife of James Earl Fraser) Both designed US Coins). Cast bronze in two sizes (131 and 92.8 mm) by Sherlock Studios. Elevation to the Cardinalate. Features the coat-of-arms and signature on the reverse.



William O'Connell, Archbishop of Boston. 1908. By Bela Lyon Pratt. (Designed US Coins). Silvered Bronze, Bronze, 76mm. Centennial of the formation of the Diocese of Boston. Features the Archbishop's coat-of-arms on the reverse.



George Cardinal Mundelein, Archbishop of Chicago. By "Silvias" probably an artist from the Stefano Johnson firm, Milan. Bronze, 50mm. This 50mm design differs greatly in legend position from the officially distributed and much more common 40mm medal. (Mundelein was educated in Rome and had many connections, five of his various medals of the 1920s and 30s use designs by Silvias and struck at Stefano Johnson.



BOOK ABOUT 50 YEARS OF JEWISH-AMERICAN HALL OF FAME MEDALS

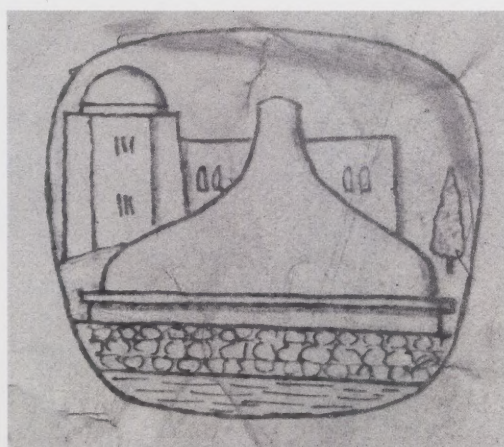
PUBLISHED ON THE NEWMAN NUMISMATIC PORTAL

Medal collectors, American history buffs and those interested in Judaica can now read Jewish-American Hall of Fame Medals 1969-2019 by Mel Wacks, newly published on the Newman Numismatic Portal at <https://nnp.wustl.edu/library/book/556056>. Mel is uniquely qualified to write this compendium of what currently is the longest continuing series of art medals in America, since he initiated the project and has overseen it for its 50 year history.

Mel says in the Introduction, "The goal [of the Jewish-American Hall of Fame medals] was not only to raise funds for the Magnes Museum, but to raise awareness in Jews and non-Jews alike in the substantial contributions made to America—and the world—by American Jews." The project was under the auspices of the Judah L. Magnes Museum in Berkeley from 1969 through 2001, when it became a division of the American Jewish Historical Society in New York. The sale of the medals has raised nearly a quarter of a million dollars for these two educational organizations, along with the American Numismatic Society, and other non-profits.

The new book features biographies of more than 50 Jewish-American Hall of Fame inductees, taken from their web site <http://www.amuseum.org/jahf>; back stories about the creation of the medal designs; medal specifications (size, mintages and mints); and short biographies of the more than dozen medalists and calligraphers who created the medals—including AMSA members Eugene Daub, Jim Licaretz, Marika Somogyi and Karen Worth. In addition, there are two appendices—one describing the Wooden Shekels issued by the Jewish-American Hall of Fame intermittently from 1968-2009, and the other listing, for the first time, all 35 Special Commemorative Medals Issued by the Jewish-American Hall of Fame—from the counterstamped Camp David Peace Dollar in 1978 through the Emma Lazarus Statue of Liberty Award (for the American Jewish Historical Society) in 2018.

Jewish-American Hall of Fame Medals 1969-2019 is an indispensable guide to a series that offers collectors a real challenge. As Mel Wacks concludes in the Preface: "It is not easy [to assemble a complete collection], since mintages are very low—as few as 100 bronze, 55 pure silver, and a minuscule 11 gold. Remember—the fun is in the hunt!" And the fun is also in reading this book, offered free to all on the Newman Numismatic Portal.



The first back story shows the development of the unique rounded trapezoidal shape, by sculptor Victor Ries, for the medals issued by the Jewish-American Hall of Fame



PERFECT MEDAL STANDS FOR COLLECTORS AND ARTISTS

WRITTEN BY CHESTER MARTIN

As an AMSA member who dates back almost to the start of that organization I well remember one of the earliest topics discussed among the members: "HOW DO I DISPLAY MY WORK TO BEST ADVANTAGE?"

All AMSA meetings were then held in New York City and so everyone who had a special sort of "new" display idea or method would bring their latest discoveries to the meetings. I have seen many examples of medal stands - some made out of wood, others out of metal, laminates, and materials other than plastic, but it was the unanimous opinion of all members that clear plastic was best. Ever since those days of the early 1980's I have kept my eyes open for the "perfect" medal stand, which I never found until very recently on Amazon (where else?) Until then, I had looked at countless jewelry display items, small plate-holders, etc., and visited all the "hobby" stores existing in my area.

The medal stands pictured here are from a company called the "OnFireGuy", and are 2.25" tall. They are one-piece, and have a wide "foot" all around the V-shaped bottom which forms a very secure and stable base. (Example on the left in the photo shows that foot very clearly). The medal depicted is a standard 3" diameter type, which is very unlikely to be scarred by the plastic stand. (I have seen medal stands made out of metal which I would dare not use in conjunction with some prized and beautifully patinaed pieces in my collection for fear of scratching). Again, I think this little number is the "ideal" I have been searching for all these years - and a pack of twelve costs only about seven (7) dollars! It is 100% functional, and the weight of the medal does not in any way overbalance the foot's stability.

Your medal itself becomes the focal point as there is nothing to detract attention away from the artwork, and I have assurances from the seller ("OnFireGuy") that the plastic is PVC free! They are in no way "flimsy"; the bronze piece being displayed sits high off the flat surface, and reclines at a perfect angle for catching ambient light. Just thought that both Artists and Collectors might like to know about this. There are other sizes you can experiment with, but this 2.25" model is ideal for holding and displaying standard 3" medals - in my opinion.



(The beautiful medal shown in the photo is by my long-time Spanish friend, Eduardo Zancada, whose equestrian statue of Spanish King Charles III graces Madrid's famous "Puerta del Sol" - roughly equal to our Times Square in New York. If not presently holding office, Zancada was the FIDEM Delegate from Spain for many years).



If one is to build a collection on quality, then one must possess both patience and restraint. When I organized my exhibition, *The Currency of Fame*, in 1994, I chose not only examples of medals from public sources, but also excellent examples from private owners and dealers. Among such medals that most excited me were two from a single source that I especially coveted, but that were not for sale: Pisanello's Cecilia Gonzaga (right) and Alfonso Ruspagliari's enigmatic image of a female subject shown in the form of an ancient bust with a face looking in from an elaborate border (top).

One of my first encounters with medals had been as a graduate student at NYU's Institute of Fine Arts when I had seen a good example of the Ruspagliari in a New York gallery. It was a duplicate from the Bodleian Library at Oxford but being a fledgling collector I was hesitant to purchase it immediately and asked the dealer if he would hold it for me overnight so that I could do some research, a request that he refused. Of course, when I returned the next day to acquire the piece, it had been sold. This failure to possess such a beautiful and intriguing piece haunted me.

Many years after the *Currency of Fame* had closed I received a telephone call from the owner of the Cecilia and the Ruspagliari offering me the latter, but at a price that was unacceptable. Eventually, after a few more years had passed, both medals appeared in a large auction liquidating the entire collection, and I was able to purchase them for far more reasonable prices. This was one of the more satisfying experiences in my collecting career, providing me with two of my most treasured possessions. It is even possible that this example of the Ruspagliari was the same one that I had originally missed as a student.

